



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness – HUD Secretary Mel Martinez, Chairman
Philip Mangano, Executive Director
Office of Public Affairs, Washington, DC 20410

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BUSH ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES \$35 MILLION PERMANENT HOUSING INITIATIVE TO COMBAT CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

HUD, HHS and VA collaborate in unprecedented joint program to help most vulnerable

WASHINGTON – In an unprecedented collaboration, the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Health and Human Services (HHS) and Veterans Affairs (VA) are launching a \$35 million program to provide permanent housing, health care and other supportive services to those experiencing chronic or long-term homelessness. Coordinated by the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness, today's funding notice builds upon the Bush Administration's goal to end chronic homelessness within a decade.

This unique funding will include \$20 million from HUD, \$10 million from HHS and \$5 million from VA and is designed to improve the delivery of federal resources that address the special housing and service needs of this population of homeless persons – many of whom have mental illness, drug/alcohol addiction and/or physical disabilities.

"This funding is the first real investment toward meeting the specific needs of our most vulnerable neighbors," said HUD Secretary Mel Martinez. "We are combining the resources and energies of three government agencies in an effort to not only help end chronic homelessness on the streets of America, but to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place."

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said, "HHS is pleased to be a partner in the Administration's commitment to ending chronic homelessness. We are keenly aware that serious health, psychiatric, and substance use disorders contribute to the complexities of long-term and repeated homelessness. The expert contributions of health care professionals, combined with the provision of permanent housing, will help break the cycle of chronic homelessness and put people on the road to recovery and self-sufficiency."

"The Department of Veterans Affairs has long recognized that the effort to end chronic homelessness must be a collaborative effort at the Federal level that will create strong effective local partnerships with faith- and community-based organizations," said VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi. "We are please to be a partner of this effort at both the national, state and local level."

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The notification of funding availability (NOFA) announced today is a critical component in addressing the needs of chronically homeless persons and will draw upon innovative local programs that promote a “housing first” approach to responding to homelessness. Research confirms that approximately 10 percent of the nation's homeless are so-called chronically homeless - often suffering from mental illness or addiction. Though a fraction of the overall homeless population, these long-term homeless persons account for approximately half off all the resources dedicated to meet the needs of the entire homeless population. *

“What we do today will make difference on the streets of our nation and create a new standard of expectation for homelessness,” said Philip Mangano, executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, the federal agency responsible for coordinating and creating homelessness policy for the Administration. “We seek visible, measurable and quantifiable change on our streets, in homeless programs and, most importantly, in the lives of homeless people. Our goal is to focus on those who are most at risk and to offer a permanent solution.”

Background on the Interagency Council

Congress established the Interagency Council in 1987 with the passage of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. Over the past six years, however, the Council was relatively dormant. Last year, President Bush reactivated the Interagency Council to better coordinate the activities of 18 federal agencies that are involved in assisting the homeless and to create the strategies to reduce and end homelessness. In addition, HUD, HHS and VA formed a joint task force to study and improve the way these agencies respond to the various needs of homeless individuals and families. Learn more about the work of the Interagency Council on Homelessness by visiting www.ich.gov.

HUD is the nation's housing agency committed to increasing homeownership, particularly among minorities, creating affordable housing opportunities for low-income Americans, supporting the homeless, elderly, people with disabilities and people living with AIDS. More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at www.hud.gov.

HHS is the government's principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves. The department includes more than 300 programs, covering a wide spectrum of activities. More information about HHS and its programs is available at www.hhs.gov.

VA serves our nation's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion as their principal advocate, ensuring that they receive medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials befitting the veteran's service to America. VA's nationwide, integrated network of homeless assistance programs offers a wide array of health care and benefits that help veterans who are homeless live as self-sufficiently and independently as possible. More information about VA and its programs is available at www.va.gov.

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** May 2001, Center for Mental Health Policy and Services Research, University of Pennsylvania. Dennis Culhane, Stephen Metraux and Trevor Hadley*